

[OC] Universe's Monsters

OC OC

Excerpt from the logs of Dr. Thul, Long time Cultural Exchange Ambassador for the Compact of Stellar Nations:

Every species thus far encountered in the Compact has the concept of monsters. Terrible beasts, often used as allegory for death or the implacable, or (as is often the case as a species matures) used as fodder for novels or vids to frighten for fun. And though the prevalence of the horror genre can vary wildly from species to species, there is still an allegorical element to most if not all of these stories for the species that originated them. Monsters are there to represent a certain warning to a species.

This is not unusual in any sense; most species of the Compact are herbivorous herd species and still haunted by the shadows which predators of their home planet once cast over them before they were ascendant. For many species, these monsters are most often predators that once hunted them, made supernaturally large, cunning, or intelligent. Good examples are the Xel's 'Taltar beast': an ancient predator of their species returned from extinction and given near or exceeding modern Xel levels of intelligence depending on the source. Or the 'Giant Lepu' a monster of the Claxtoni: a normally docile creature with large ears upsized to megafauna levels capable of stripping a forest in a day and trampling a grown Claxton underfoot; it's often only capable of being destroyed by great cunning in their legends and more contemporary works.

But, even predatory species have monsters. Often they are allegory for disease, injury, and famine brought by overhunting or low numbers of prey. The Gabu-gabu of the Varen, a nebulous creature said to live in swamps and whose touch is rot and almost sure death is a good example of this type.

However there is an outlier to all this: Humans.

Humans have come into the galactic fold with many more monsters than any other species on record and continue to create more as time goes on. Their past has many examples from both sides of the allegorical coin that many attribute to their omnivorous nature and their ancestors needing to borrow from both traditions of monster. Their myriad of creations drawing from these two forces as well as other factors is fascinating as it is disturbing.

Humans are also the only species that bring with them monsters that are, in essence, Humans themselves, rather than a representation of another creature or outside force. Vampires, Werewolves, the Invisible Man, Prometheans are all monsters that can pass as human in society and wreak havoc, or even were once human and still capable of havoc after death such as ghosts and zombies.

Note that these are not takes on the almost universal 'dark mirror' adversaries that are found in most species myths, where a cursed mirror or the like brings to life a protagonist's opposite and must be defeated. And while similar in regards to many prey species style horror on the surface, underneath they actually are insights into parts of the darkness of the human psyche.

One only needs to look at their history and see that the greatest killer of humans they can put form to are none other than themselves. From their early ancestors eradicating their fellow hominids through the seas of blood they have spilled against each other till now, it has shaped their psyche: They are both prey and predator to one another.

The Vampire is an immortal being of great strength and power that was once human, but now must feed off the vital fluid of the living to maintain its powers. The predator/prey dynamic is there, however it's interesting to note that when the monster came into vogue, humanity was already at the top of the food chain. It seems more a warning about the predation of one's own species from those in positions of power.

The Werewolf is a being that is a human that can transform into a bestial superpredator with lupine features under certain conditions, that murders almost indiscriminately. Again, there is a predator/prey angle there but it seems more so about the potential of the predatory, bestial nature lurking within the heart of each human, and the importance of community and society in keeping it tamped down.

The Invisible (hu)Man is less about fear of the unseen that you can only hear/smell, like you might think from most prey species horror, but more about the moral and ethical degeneration most humans would agree would happen if an individual human could get away with nearly anything.

Ghosts are incorporeal beings that are the lingering anima of humans that are bound to the material for a variety of reasons but most often strong emotions: hate, fear, or unfinished business. Rather than the helpful spirits of many species mythos, ghosts are often violent or possessive. These are warnings against the murder of fellow humans lest they linger and haunt or ruin you, and a testament to the capacity for human hatred and need for vengeance that can surpass even death itself.

Prometheans, also known as Frankenstein's, are hard looks about science in absence of ethics: scientists so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should. Introspections into the creation of new species, as well as humanity's reaction to the outsider come among them.

Zombies are unique as they are simply reanimated dead humans without any higher brain function that implacably advance and swarm the still living: true to human tenacity as pursuit predators. They can be used as an allegorical stand in for nearly anything potentially societally detrimental about large groups of humans, from undying nationalism, to unpreparedness for infectious disease, to blind consumerism.

Their monsters are them, and they are their monsters.

But I would argue though that the *real* horror of Humanity is that, at some deep level, they admire these monsters in their image, and seek to emulate them. Or at the very least, draw inspiration from them, as Humans would much rather be the monster and possibly lose themselves than be prey.

One needs only to look at the recent leak involving the rumored Terran Republic Armed Forces' Project Nosferatu. Deep nanite enhanced human Special Forces capable of greatly increased senses, mind bending reflexes and strength, and levels of regeneration that sound absurd, but all nigh indistinguishable from a normal human.

Or their recently declassified Project Garou. Where militias of the early human colonies in the Agamemnon Reaches during tensions with the Belith Stellar Dominion were seeded with veterans who agreed to accept a specific rapid acting genejack that could be triggered in the event of invasion to help aid with guerilla warfare on the ground should it come to that. One only needs to look at the New Vancouver incident to see their effectiveness.

There are countless other examples of them taking cues from their monsters as well: From their Phantom II stealth suits, their very first AI who unironically named himself 'Frank', or their proposed (and *highly* controversial) 'Changeling Program' for Pre-FTL civilization reconnaissance.

I'll leave you though with one last allegorical thought..

In most human literature in order to defeat a 'classic' human monster; it is almost always a group or the community that must come together to overcome the monster, with sharp objects and torches to push back the dark. What does that say then about Humanity itself and its monsters on the galactic stage?

Oh.. But in those stories sometimes they only succeed in driving it off for a time. And I will point out there is an awful lot of darkness out in space...

I've been sitting on this for a little while and had hoped to submit it to the [Hallows 7] but it didn't really fit any of the categories. So, Im just going to release it as a thing for Spookymonth.

Feedback welcome!

